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Hilltopics Staff

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Be Heard: *Hilltopics* is always looking for good submissions on virtually any topic. Email your ideas, feedback, or articles to hilltopics@hotmail.com.

Life before and after the General Education Curriculum

by Dr. John R. Chávez

This article was inspired by Reed Hanson's "Reform Our General Education Curriculum," *Mustang Post*, 30 November 2006. It can be found at www.smumustangpost.com

In a mythical age prior to my daughter's memory, I attended high school, a man school where the language of Rome and the football of America ruled. It was a Catholic boys' school that offered a traditional curriculum, in many ways still recognizable, but in others not. We men studied geometry, algebra, and higher math, not to mention the hard sciences, such as chemistry and maybe biology, if physics proved too tough. You took the soft social sciences if you weren't up to the hard stuff. Of course, we had four years of English, centered on Shakespeare and Cardinal Newman (George Eliot was suspect). American history and Western Civilization appeared through a Christian lens. Despite French and Spanish offerings, I took four years of Latin, a demanding subject that recalled imperial power. Needless to say, the school required four years of religion to deepen our spiritual lives. The capstone was apologetics, taken in the senior year so we could defend our faith when confronted with those atheistic college professors. It was a solid education anchored in Europe, paid for by my working older sister.

When a Catholic liberal arts college came recruiting, the price tag proved too high, so I went to the nearest big state university where the secular world threatened. General education (GE) was required, though less diverse than today. A familiar distribution of sciences, social sciences, humanities, and physical education lay before me. It turned out more enlightening than I'd ever expected. The Franciscans and my parents were right to fear the pros. In my very first term the introductory course, Philosophical Ideas, challenged my beliefs to the core. This general education class, the only one in philos-

ophy I ever took, was my most important college course because it taught me systematic reasoning. This class forced me to reevaluate what I had previously learned, make it my own, or set it aside. Another course of similar impact, also taken my very first year, was introductory anthropology. I was shocked to learn that some African villages raised children collectively, rather than in the nuclear families encouraged in my society. Later, this made me more tolerant of alternative families, such as the blended ones, decried by my religious training, but now common in the Western World. Though such classes only scratched the surface of their disciplines, they exposed me to ideas and whole fields that would change my life.

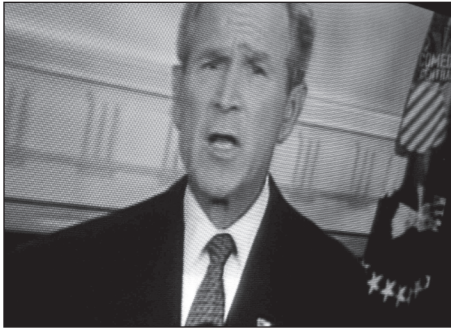
Of course, the major and minor fields were the parts of the curriculum that I studied in depth. Any student would have learned the basics from the one-year GE language requirement, and the exposure often stoked further interest. In my case Spanish became a minor, then a second major. Though English remained my first major, Latin lost its status to the modern languages as the Spanish of my home gained value in a secular environment. In languages, nonetheless, the GE curriculum of the time remained limited, taught largely by non-native speakers. Though there were minimal offerings in Chinese and Arabic, Japanese, Hindi, let alone Swahili or Nahuatl were non-existent. But just as the Renaissance vernacular languages had inserted themselves into the traditional Greek and Latin curriculum, Third World languages and cultures began to crash the modern academy. My fellow students attacked my English, Spanish, and other courses as Eurocentric; my peers argued that the general curriculum often ignored questions central to women, American minorities, and the majority of the world's peoples. Consequently, as an elective, I took one of the first GE classes ever offered in Chicano studies. There I learned that the language of Malintzin and the Az-

see GEC on page 2.

We welcome submissions from all members of the SMU community. Letters to the editor should be up to 300 words in response to a previously published article. Contributions should be articles of up to 300-600 words on any topic or in response to another article. Please email your submission to hilltopics@hotmail.com by Wednesday at 7:00 PM to be included in the following week's publication. Special deadlines will be observed for breaking campus events. The opinions expressed in *Hilltopics* are those of the authors solely and do not reflect the beliefs of *Hilltopics* or any other entity. As such, *Hilltopics* does not publish anonymous articles.

Faculty uprising over the Bush Presidential Library and Bush Institute: Too little, too late

by Todd Baty



The atmosphere of SMU's campus is drastically different than when we left it last December. A once quiet and relatively tranquil place, the boulevard is now best characterized by a cacophony of news reporters, faculty rants, and admin-

istrative press conferences—all this, brought on by a predictable announcement that SMU would (in all likelihood) be the future home of the George W. Bush Presidential Library, Museum, and Institute. We have won the race; we are the sole surviving candidate—is anyone truly surprised?

However, in the wake of this announcement, the faculty has now decided that it is time for their wishes and opinions to be made public. An emergency meeting of the Faculty Senate over the break discussed the possible negative consequences of hosting the said presidential complex, and the story of their discontent with the current plans quickly went national. *The New York Times*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Houston Chronicle*, and other major newspapers have all sent representatives to cover, as one newspaper put it, the "Discordant Chorus" of faculty voices in opposition to the Bush complex.

Regardless of how one feels about the appropriateness of the Bush proposal as it currently stands, one cannot help but wonder where these same outspoken individuals were in the past six years. The plans to bring the George W. Bush Library (and associated museum and institute) to SMU's beautiful campus have not been any secret; indeed, in many ways, SMU has been in the hunt for the presidential complex since January 20, 2001. Why have individuals that are supposedly so passionately opposed to the Bush complex just now voicing their concerns? Why have they chosen to wait until SMU was essentially chosen as the future site of Bush's legacy to begin a debate?

The time for talk was long ago, when the Board of Trustees first made it known that SMU would pursue the George W. Bush Presidential Library. The claims of insufficient transparency by the administration are weak and somewhat embarrassing; local media sources (heck, even our own *Daily*

Campus) have been predicting this announcement and its surrounding details for years. In fact, just examining other contemporary presidential libraries (such as those of Clinton and Bush, Sr.) would have provided anyone interested with a sense of what to expect in the form of a presidential complex. And while I agree that this university should have entered into deep and meaningful talks about its potential role as the host of the Bush Foundation's project, for the faculty opponents of the Bush proposal, it is simply too little, too late. The time for debate was four to six years ago, when SMU took its first step toward landing the Bush Presidential Library, not on the eve of an announcement granting us that prize. Surly a group of individuals so used to paper and publishing deadlines would recognize the importance of raising questions and concerns at the appropriate time.

Todd Baty is a junior music and history major.

CEC is essential to challenging the way students look at the world continued from page 1

tics could teach our society in ways the languages of Cervantes, Shakespeare, Newman, and Caesar could not. As a whole, my college experience revealed that the traditional stress on Western Civilization was too narrow in an already globalizing environment.

I went on to specialize in graduate school, but the liberating influence of general education left its imprint. On receiving the BA, I had obviously grown beyond the child fresh out of secondary school. No, I didn't become an atheist, despite my mother's complaints that my church attendance dropped. No, I didn't become a radical Democrat, my first vote going to Nixon, to the horror of my working-class father. Ballet did not replace football, though my loyalties switched to college, rather than high school teams. While later experiences had their effects, general education set a foundation that allowed me choices in life relatively independent of my family, church, party, and culture. General education was sometimes alienating, but in important ways it brought me home again. It re-formed me in unexpected ways because it was broad (precisely what "general" means) and open to the world.

If you want an education that simply reaffirms your earliest beliefs, home-school and go to Bible college. Universities, even SMU, are dangerous places, and ought to remain so!

Dr. John R. Chávez is a professor of history.

Do you have an opinion about... politics, music, class, television, football, shopping, intramurals, fraternities, movies, tests, the Mavs, sex, restaurants, religion, sororities, driving, study abroad, Umphrey Lee, fashion, news, the war, parking, technology, magazines, bars, baseball, the weather, professors, the Mustang Band, dating, books, nightclubs, Texas, the Daily Campus, pets, club sports, or anything else ?

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Bush's falling popularity means that all the good he's done for our economy is overlooked

by Douglas Hill

There is no denying that George W. Bush is an unpopular President. Speaking with some of my Bush-bashing friends lately, I was surprised that their reaction to his State of the Union was not outrage, but pity. They kept saying things like, "I feel bad for the guy...Imagine what it must be like to know everyone in America dislikes you and everyone in the rest of the world downright hates you" or "He's like a pathetic little cowboy." And I'll be honest, I don't envy Mr. Bush his job right now, but if we're all honest, I think we'll realize that Mr. Bush's problems are in large part of his own making.

But that's precisely the problem with trying to craft a President's legacy before he's even left office. In 2001, when nearly nine out of ten Americans approved of the job Mr. Bush was doing, it would have been nearly impossible to give Mr. Bush a negative public image, and now with all our political (not to mention journalistic) energy focused on a failing Iraq strategy, it is easy to overlook the things Mr. Bush has done right—namely managing our economy.

I spent a summer working construction in the heart of Red State America, and during that time I spent my days with a decidedly Red State type of fellow named Ed. He was my mentor, in that he taught me how to use saws and drills, but he also took it upon himself to be a kind of personal



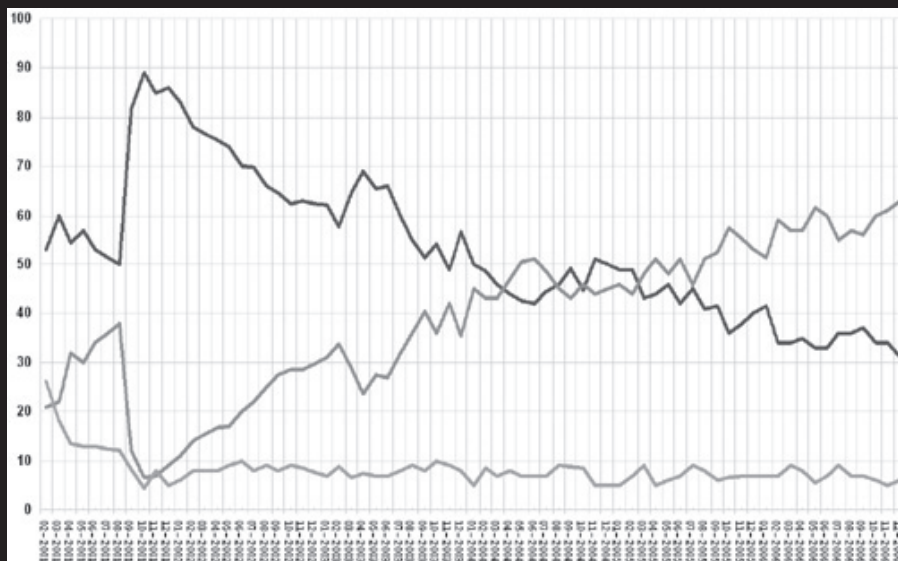
mentor to me. Among the advice he gave me: "Trust me, if you ever think you feel those critters down there, you get to a doctor pronto or you'll be itchin' for weeks. Yep, only gets worse," and "Oh, don't worry about safety too much. We've got workers' condensation." Another thing that stuck with me was this: "They should elect me President. Keep gas prices and taxes low, and if anything goes wrong—go to war. I'll get reelected a dozen times."

Generally in American politics, Ed is right. If taxes are low and the economy is performing well, a President will be rewarded with a contented public. Mr. Bush, however, has done both of those things, and he even went to war, too, which is why it is so remarkable what the Iraq War has done to Mr. Bush's approval ratings. In Mr. Bush's term the average American's income has gone up by around ten percent. In the past year, real (inflation-adjusted) income has gone up by about 2.5 percent. Jobs have been added to the economy for forty straight months, and the unemployment rate is at a low 4.5 percent. In the past year, the United States has had faster growth than any other industrialized nation, and inflation has been at near-record lows for almost all of Mr. Bush's administration. The Dow Jones Industrial Average has closed at an all-time high on ten separate occasions since October 2006. It doesn't matter what indicator you use, our economy is healthy and has generally stayed healthy throughout the time Mr. Bush has been at the helm. Still, though, about seven in ten Americans don't approve of his leadership.

As the saying goes, fifty million Frenchmen can't be wrong—Mr. Bush is obviously doing something terribly wrong, both militarily and politically, in Iraq. But while his failing Iraq policy seems to be the topic of every news show or celebrity commentary, little attention is given to the economy, which is normally the most important political issue to most Americans. Mr. Bush seems to be learning, along with the rest of us, that it's not all about the Benjamins, after all.

Douglas Hill is a senior international studies major.

BUSH'S DECLINING POPULARITY



The above chart indicates President George W. Bush's approval ratings between February 2001 and December 2006, according to a CBS News/New York Times Poll. The question asked was, "Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president?" The dark, downward-sloping line is the percentage of respondents who approved. The lighter, upward-sloping line is the percentage of respondents who disapproved. The flatter line at the bottom is the percentage of respondents who were unsure. Two spikes in popularity can be noted in September 2001, just after the 9/11 attacks and in March 2003, just after the start of the Iraq war. Otherwise, the graph shows a near complete trend toward decreasing popularity. Source: www.pollingreport.com/bushjob.htm

Incubus show proves that Gypsy Tearoom can surpass larger venues like AAC or Smirnoff

by Jenny Simon

Now that Deep Ellum has been dominated by construction, the usual crowd of weekend partiers has decreased.

Still people make their way through the mayhem to see a live show. Now that Trees has closed, Gypsy Tearoom has become the dominating small music venue in Downtown Dallas. Small venues are becoming more popular amongst musicians daily. By hosting bands like Keller William, The Roots and Incubus, Gypsy's status has become famous.

On Wednesday January 17, 2007 the widely known alternative band Incubus came to play at Gypsy Tearoom for one of the most anticipated concerts of the year. I had the awesome opportunity to see this band live.

Tickets for the concert sold out only hours after they went on sale. Since the show was all ages the crowd ranged from die hard teenage fans to older long time listeners. The line to get into Gypsy for this concert wrapped around the building, and there were even rumors that some fans had been waiting

in line since 10:00 a.m. to guarantee a spot in front. This was obviously going to be a killer show.



Albert Hammond Jr., which includes the lead singer from The Strokes, opened the show. Their set got the crowd pumped up for Incubus. When Incubus finally got on stage around 10:00 p.m. fans went crazy! Their set included multiple songs from their new album, but mainly focused on songs from "Morning View". Brandon Boyd's vocal execution was perfect. His voice live sounds just as appealing as it does on recorded albums. His live performance kept the crowd wanting more, and his slow striptease kept all the ladies intrigued.

The most amazing part of the whole show was that it took place at Gypsy Tearoom instead of a large venue like American Airlines Center or Smirnoff. The concert was more intimate for the audience because of the closeness to the band. Small venues are popular amongst big name bands and the opportunity for SMU students to catch a killer show for \$30 or under is easy. So I suggest to everyone, go down to Deep Ellum and check out some live music at Gypsy Tearoom. Here's a starter for you, The Roots play on February 19, 2007; Get yourself a ticket and jam out to some hip-hop.

Jenny Simon is a junior sociology major.

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